

James Raymond
Exeter Youth Lacrosse Association
5 Hillside Avenue
Exeter, NH
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Exeter Board of Selectmen
10 Front Street
Exeter, NH 03833

Our association consists of approximately 210 boys and 140 girls residing in Brentwood, Exeter, Kensington, East Kingston, Newfields and Stratham. We currently have 21 teams that need access to quality fields. On behalf of the Exeter Youth Lacrosse Association ("EYLA") we would like to express our full support for the Parks and Recreation Department's proposal to expand and modernize the Recreation Complex on Hampton Road.

Growth of the Sport Locally and Nationally

In the last five years, the EYLA girl's program has experienced a significant increase in annual enrollment. The EYLA boy's program has consistently maintained between 200 and 250 players. Additionally, the sport has shown substantial growth in the Seacoast area and will continue to grow.

According to the [NCAA Sports Sponsorship and Participation Rates Report](#) published last year, Lacrosse is the fastest growing college sport in the nation. Growth across men's and women's lacrosse across all NCAA divisions notably outpaced all other sports from 2000-2014. Participation in women's lacrosse increased by 109% (225 teams to 470) while men's lacrosse participation is up 95% (203 teams to 350). These growth rates far outpace any other college sport by approximately 40%. Needless to say, Lacrosse is no longer a low-profile sport.

With the addition of college teams along comes opportunity for athletic scholarships for our future high school players. However, for Exeter to benefit, we need a high quality youth program that can compete with the best programs in NH. It starts with access to high quality fields. You only have to look to our MA neighbors and you will find town programs that have the ability to use their local high school turf field(s) or other for-profit businesses that provide high quality turf fields for a fee. Sadly, the Seacoast area is lacking in these facilities. The lack of indoor field space also poses a problem for our youth program. In the winter, our kids that want to improve their skills have to drive to Maine to access indoor facilities. Most of the indoor facilities in NH are owned by Seacoast United and thus reserved for soccer programs.

Limited Field Space During the Season

We have found field space in Exeter to be inadequate, expensive and in some cases, sub-par. Currently, we are utilizing the following fields: Linden Street, Phillips Exeter Academy, Sawyer Park (Kensington), Stratham Park and CMS. While SUA 16 does not currently charge us for use of their fields they also do not put any effort into repairing the fields. We are fortunate to play on the high school turf field on a rare occasion. However, competing programs, such as Bedford, Manchester, Nashua and Portsmouth provide significant turf field access to their youth programs.